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LETTER  
TO A  
MERCHANT.

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LETTER

TO A

M. R. C. M. N. T.



A  
LETTER  
TO A  
MERCHANT,

MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS;

On his Public Declaration,  
That *He sees no business* BISHOPS have in Parliament.

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BY A LAYMAN.

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*Wm. Beecher*

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. BELL, NO. 148, OXFORD-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVIII.

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LETTER

IN TWO A

MERCANTILE

MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

On his Public Election

That He was always a Member of the House of Commons

BY A LAYMAN

LONDON

PRINTED FOR J. BELL, NO. 2, OXFORD-STREET.

M. DCC. XCIII.



## LETTER,

&amp;c.

SIR,

I CONFESS myself to be one of those who, unenlightened by the new philosophy, continue to regard the Prelates of our Church with sincere and undiminished reverence.

I respect them—not because their carriages are adorned with mitres, or because the fable of their gowns is relieved by the contrast of lawn-sleeves—but because I am persuaded that, without a single exception, they are men of piety as pure as belongs to human frailty, and of erudition the most varied and profound.

B

Impressed

Impressed with sentiments of this description, and avowing the principles of the old school, I own that I listened with astonishment, and not without indignation, to the language of a Member of the House of Commons, who, in a public address to his constituents at a corporation dinner, declared in unequivocal terms, that "he could see no business Bishops have in Parliament."

I will not, for an instant, attribute to an elected Guardian of the British Constitution such total ignorance of its fundamental principles, as to conceive that he meant to question that old prescriptive *right* by which our Bishops take their seats, and vote in the Upper House. As an opponent in argument, I will allow to his expression a latitude which as a lexicographer I should refuse—and will suppose, that, in denying them to have any *business* in Parliament, he only intended to suggest a doubt as to  
the



the probability of any *service* which they may render as a part of the great national council.

In examining the positive merit of those who compose the Parliament of Great Britain, we must proceed as a chemist would do in analysing a compound with a view to ascertain the specific strength of its various ingredients—we must separate the classes, and determine the value of one by its comparative estimate with that of the rest.

In the present instance, a charge of *inutility*, as Peers of Parliament, is brought against the Heads of our Church, by a Gentleman eminent in the commercial world, himself a member of the Legislature. It seems then to me that the surest and fairest way to determine that question, which must ultimately prove the point in dispute, will

be, at once to join issue on the respective pretensions of Bishops and of Merchants, as beneficial members of the legislative body.

I profess myself to be of counsel for their Lordships ; and if, in endeavouring to enforce my opinion, I should have the misfortune to incur the displeasure of gentlemen on the other side, they will have the goodness to recollect that they themselves have provoked the discussion. We appear by compulsion, and answer as defendants.

In speaking to you, Sir, I wish it to be understood that I address the great collected body of British Traders. I know that you are fond of dividing yourself into classes most accurately discriminated: it would require a master of the ceremonies to regulate your claims to precedence—Were I appointed to that office, I should follow the example of Charles the Fifth,  
who



who settled at Bruffels a disputed point of similar importance, by ordering that the silliest should *take the pas*.—But though I understand that your scale of comparative dignity is graduated *ad infinitum*, yet I believe that the grand insuperable line of demarkation is that which separates a counting-house from a shop. I own that I have never been able to discover any very material disparity in the respective merits of two men—one of whom sits bartering whole years behind a desk—while the other stands as long, employed in precisely the same manner, behind a counter. I do not wish to depreciate the exertions of those among you whose wide-expanded view embraces an universe—who send forth their adventurous fleets, exploring unknown seas, and returning loaded with the riches of other worlds. I admire their spirit of enterprise. I rank them superior to the merchants of Tyre and of Sidon, and infe-

rior only to him whom Voltaire thus describes—"What a curious sight, and how  
"contrary to the manners of our times, to  
"see the same person with one hand sell  
"the commodities of the Levant, and with  
"the other support a State, receive Am-  
"bassadors, give his mediation to Princes,  
"and cultivate and encourage Learning!—  
"Such was Lorenzo de Medicis, the illust-  
"rious citizen of Florence." How far  
their successful labours can entitle them to  
be classed among the benefactors to man-  
kind, is a question which well deserves to  
be considered. This is however a point  
which I have at present neither the leisure  
nor the inclination to discuss. Mr. Seward,  
to whose "Anecdotes" I own myself in-  
debted for more than the present illustra-  
tion, has transcribed a manuscript letter  
which Columbus wrote to the king of  
Spain from his fleet then lying before Ja-  
maica. It breathes a sadly prophetic strain—

The



The following is a remarkable passage—

“The wealth which I have discovered will  
 “rouse mankind to pillage and to violence,  
 “and will revenge the wrongs which I  
 “have suffered.” The venerable author of  
 “Antient Metaphysics,” whose genius still  
 blooms with all the vigour of its prime,  
 may be consulted as a commentator on this  
 prophecy. He has comprised, in a few  
 emphatic lines, the whole of what it may  
 be necessary to say—“As there is more  
 “wealth in England than in any other  
 “country of Europe, so there are there to  
 “be found more of its bad effects than any-  
 “where else—for there are in England more  
 “crimes and vices, more disease, and more  
 “indigence than in any other nation now  
 “existing, or that I believe ever did exist.”

Without dwelling upon a subject too deli-  
 cate and important to be handled inciden-  
 tally, and which, perhaps, upon some fu-  
 ture occasion, may receive a fuller and more

regular discussion ; it will, I believe, be acknowledged, that the immense accumulation of wealth, in the hands of mercantile capitalists, has produced effects in Parliament which have not yet attained their full completion. They who, younger than myself, can expect to see the middle of the ensuing century, will, I fear, discover that Parliament still retains its loco-motive faculty. The Upper House may, perhaps, be allowed to continue on its old foundation some years longer—but the Commons will, I make no doubt, ere then, transfer their sittings to the Royal Exchange, and hold their committees at Lloyd's Coffee-house. Nothing but your fondness for the West end of the town can preserve the old fabric from becoming an untenanted ruin—unless, indeed, the good sense of Government, co-operating with the energy of the Nation, should produce a Reform in the Representation of the People.

I was



I was not without hopes that the very considerable diminution in the emoluments of Trading Legislators, by the restrictions of the last Franking Bill, would have thinned the mercantile ranks in the Lower House: but Loans and Contracts, and Tetes-à-Tetes in Downing-street, still continue—and perhaps even now it may be no bad speculation for a commercial house to club the price of Corruption, and purchase a Seat for one of its Partners.—While Leadenhall, Lombard-street, and the Exchange, continue to send forth their legions of unlettered Senators, it becomes the duty of independent men to keep a watchful eye upon a powerful body, possessing a dangerous and increasing influence. You have already told us, Sir, that Bishops have no business in Parliament. With a little encouragement you would soon, no doubt, advance a few steps further—You might loyally wish to relieve our Military Men from that attendance

tendance in the Senate which occasionally interferes with their professional duties: the Gentlemen of the Long Robe might humanely be apprised of the insufficiency of human lungs to go beyond the daily exertions of Westminster-Hall;—and it might be discovered that the Country Gentlemen are kept with reluctance from their rural avocations. England might be pronounced a Commercial Country, and Mercantile Men be pronounced the natural Guardians of her Prosperity.—A Sweeping Act might soon leave you sole inmates of the old decayed Mansion—and your Assembly would then most richly deserve that epithet of “lack-learning” with which Sir Edward Coke and his contemporaries have stigmatized the Parliament which drove them from their Seats.

While speaking of “unlettered Senators,”  
I should be unjust if I involved the whole  
of



of your body in one general indiscriminate censure. There are among you men of expanded minds and cultivated understandings—men of real and profound learning, glowing with warm and generous hearts—men, whose sentiments are refined, and whose manners are elegant. Some of them I have the happiness and the pride to call my friends.—But you must pardon me, Sir, if, speaking in general terms, I should pronounce you to be a set of insolent, ignorant, and purse-proud upstarts. Although I do not entirely agree with Mandeville, that private vices are public benefits, yet perhaps there would have been no great danger in allowing you the undisturbed enjoyment of your antient privileges—You might have continued to keep your girls and drive your gigs, and to bluster and be troublesome in theatres and in taverns. Thus far you might have trodden upon the heels of Men of Quality, without any material

terial inconvenience to the State :—but the moment that you walked into Parliament as Representatives of Boroughs and of Counties, you, in my opinion, advanced a step too far—and, notwithstanding your slender talents, became formidable to your country. I shall not at present discuss the propriety of sending you from great commercial towns, to watch the interests of your Body in the House of Commons. There is, I know, a Law of Merchants—the Lex Mercatoria. There is likewise a Criminal Code—Yet I trust that the Bow-street Magistrates will never, under that pretence, become either makers or expounders of the Laws of England. There are in both our Houses, men unconnected with its practice, who are to the full as capable as any of yourselves, of debating every question relating to trade—One of them has lately been appointed to an important office in your city. But what shall we say  
to



to that ambition, which, bearing you with eagle wing beyond the limits of Saint Stephen's, has lately fluttered about the House of Peers? When you entered those venerable walls, you yourselves only became ridiculous—The Minister who introduced you was something worse. Mazarin, on his triumphant return to Paris, after the Peace of the Pyrennées, created new Peers, in such unprecedented numbers that the Court was startled—"I will make so many" of them (replied the Cardinal) that it shall "be equally disgraceful either to be or not to be one." They who are acquainted with the history of his administration, will at once perceive the motive, and its policy. Neither the one nor the other can influence a British Cabinet. The example of Louis the Eleventh is in one instance more worthy of imitation. With a view to encourage the traders and manufacturers of his kingdom, he admitted them frequently to his table.

table. A merchant, whom he had distinguished by particular attentions, applied to him for letters of nobility : he granted them immediately ; and never honoured him with any further notice—"Go your ways, Mr. gentleman," said the shrewd monarch ; "when I permitted you to sit at my table, "I looked upon you as the first man of "your rank—you are now the last."

When Veterans, whose skill and valour have protected our coast from insult and depredation—when Statesmen, whose genius has planned and conducted important enterprises—when Ministers of Justice, who have held her scale with firm unshaken hand—when Prelates, whose piety has improved, and whose wisdom has illumined mankind—when persons of this description present themselves at the Bar of the Upper House, the noblest of the ancient Barons must rise from their seats, and greet them as honourable



able compeers. Placed on such brows, the new coronets reflect fresh lustre upon the old. But, when men distinguished by no other merit than that of heavy assiduity, and of sluggish perseverance—men who, by sitting whole years behind a desk, have scraped together those treasures which enable them to pour a torrent of corruption into every Borough—men whose names excite no other idea than that of mere stock-jobbers, and rich drivers of bargains; who, however amiable or respectable in private life, are unknown to the public, by benefits conferred on the nation, or on mankind—When men, I say, of this description are announced as their brethren and equals in rank, the real Nobles of the land must turn aside with indignation and disgust.

Do not imagine that, puffed up with the pride of ancestry, I look with contempt  
upon

upon those who are born in less elevated stations. No, Sir ! hereditary honours will not be transmitted through me to posterity. Great, and indeed inordinate, as is my ambition to represent my country in the Lower House, I should think that my ancestors blushed in their graves, were I ever to harbour even the most secret wish for a seat in the Upper. I respect all men, however undignified their birth or uncultivated their abilities, who have sense enough to know and to keep their proper sphere ; but, the moment that, impelled by vanity, they quit the humble rank adapted to the mediocrity of their pretensions, and invite public notice by placing their incapacity upon an eminence, that very moment I will exert a privilege which I derive from their indiscretion, and shall indulge myself, as I may think proper, either in a smile or a frown, at their expence.

Although



Although, in imitation of your general assertion, respecting Bishops, I feel no difficulty in acknowledging, that “I see no “business Merchants have among Peers”—yet in whatever I have already said, or may hereafter advance, I beg leave, in solemn and unequivocal terms, to disclaim the most remote intention of personal allusion. I know that a gentleman of the first eminence in your city has lately been distinguished by very high and uncommon honours. The great and good qualities of his head and of his heart have silenced the voice of public censure, and unfortunately sanction the precedent. I am sorry that it should exist. Its consequences are beyond the power of calculation. Thousands among you, without any pretensions but those connected with the funds, will start as candidates for a similar reward—Some few may perhaps succeed, the rest will be dissatisfied, and sprout up into patriots. “Civil wars,” observes the

acute Pascal, "will assuredly take place, if  
"you pretend to recompense private merit;  
"for every one will tell you, that he has it."  
How that of a Merchant is to be ascer-  
tained, or to what standard it must be re-  
ferred, requires more knowledge of civic  
worth than falls to my share. I know,  
however, that even the worst amongst you  
are exempt from particular vices, and are  
marked by characteristic virtues. You are  
in general prudent and frugal, those not ex-  
cepted who most affect the reputation of pro-  
fligacy—Like John Gilpin's wife, "though  
bent on pleasure, they have a saving mind."  
You are upon almost all occasions just to an  
accuracy, and punctiliously exact in your  
engagements. You have not studied the  
tables of interest so long without finding  
that "Honesty is the best policy." Even  
Shylock, the Jew merchant, claimed no-  
thing but his bond.

Simple



Simple Knighthood may perhaps have lost a little of its dignity, since those times when one of your Chief Magistrates declined the honour, as too distinguished for a Citizen in trade. I should otherwise have conceived the imposition of the Royal Sword to be a remuneration equivalent to most of your deserts. Men, however, may come forward, whose services to the State in matters of finance enable them to require that their posterity should be marked by some hereditary badge. Well then, add at once the bloody hand of Ulster to their armorial bearings, and admit them into that innocent class of amphibious nondescripts, called Baronets: men, who without nobility are said to possess dignity, and who, themselves undistinguished by any dangerous or offensive privilege, give founding titles to their wives, and communicate to their daughters the enviable happiness of precedence at a ball.

I have already acknowledged that there exist among you persons of deep and extensive knowledge, adorned with the manners and sentiments of men engaged in more liberal pursuits. May I venture to hope for their indulgence, if I should candidly own that I have sometimes thought I perceived an air of inconsistency, of something out of character, in the appearance of those fortunate few, who thus unite the gentleman and the man of business? I question whether upon the whole I should not prefer the honest vulgarity of their predecessors—it was more appropriate, more characteristic. Things were perhaps as much in their order, when, according to Shakespear's Jack Cade, "their forefathers" "had no other books than the score and "the tally." Their appearance is that of a portrait, in which the drapery is indeed elegant, but in which the costume has not been preserved. They strike me, as Photius

the



the smooth-chinned eunuch must have struck the people of Constantinople when he presented himself before them, as patriarch, with his bushy beard.

“The wonder’s how the devil it got there.”

You will recollect, that speaking of those in whom the merchant and the man of fashion thus happily coalesce, I by no means allude to those impertinent city fops, who are at once the pest and ridicule of all our public places. To talk loud in a side box and disturb an audience; to elbow ladies, in lounging through the lobby; to pelt orange-peel at the wenches, and offend the eyes and ears of modest women, are I own most rapid strides towards perfection in modern gentility. But all is not yet complete—there is a certain perfume of fashion, if I may so express myself, which the rank smell of the shop will never allow these gentlemen to exhale. When they struggle

hardest to hide the cloven foot, and to pass for men of the town, there is always a certain awkward something, which betrays the quarter whence they come. They remind me of their own church in Lombard-street, where an affected or blundering architect has placed the altar at the wrong end.

I should wish to be informed what benefit the public can expect to derive from men of this description admitted into the councils of the nation. Perhaps they may bring along with them their saving knowledge, together with their accuracy in calculations, and shrewdness in bargains. Philip de Comines observes, that "in most battles with the French, the English have the advantage; but that they are generally deceived and outwitted by them in their treaties."—A committee of these gentlemen might perhaps not be without its use, upon the principle of "Diamond cut diamond,"



“mond,” in preventing our Ministers from being over-reached by these crafty negotiators. There is a strong expression applied, I think, by Livy, to the man who first contrived to introduce their brethren into the Senate of Rome, “Senatum inquinavit,”—he defiled the Senate. So fearful indeed were the Romans lest their Senators should disgrace themselves by trade, that neither they, or even their fathers, were allowed to keep a bark of more than sufficient burthen for the conveyance of grain from their farms to the capital.

The Merchants of Britain have received a flattering compliment from the pen of the immortal Montesquieu. He has joined their profession with the two greatest blessings enjoyed by man—“England,” says he, “of all the nations in the world has best known how to make the most of those three great things, Religion, Commerce,

"and Liberty."—Their brethren of Paris appear, however, to have differed in opinion from this able politician respecting the benefits which trade might derive from the protection of Government. When asked by Colbert, the Minister of Finance, in what manner he could serve them—they instantly replied, "By leaving us to ourselves"—"Laissez-nous faire."—This pithy answer is in itself a volume—and may serve, hereafter, as the foundation of much argument, if you should think proper to urge any further discussion of the present question.

Were I merely to consider your elevation to the rank of Senators, in a moral point of view, and with reference to yourselves alone, I should heartily congratulate you upon a successful election. Gonsalvo, surnamed the Great Captain, retired some years before he died to a convent, observing, that "there should be some time for serious reflection"



“flection between the life of a foldier and  
“his death.” You will excuse me, Sir—  
but I have the fame opinion refpecting a  
Merchant. Nine of you out of ten may  
exclaim with Cæſar Borgia on his death-  
bed, “I have provided, in the courſe of my  
“life, for every thing, excepting death—  
“Alas! I was too buſy to think of that.”  
Your Religion—I beg your pardon, Sir,—  
the Religion of your country debars you the  
benefit of Gonſalvo’s monaſtic retreat. But  
the benches of St. Stephen’s Chapel will  
answer the purpoſe full as well. In thoſe  
many borish hours of uninterreſting debate,  
when, loſt in a placid ſtate of mental in-  
activity, and at perfect freedom from all  
thought, you wait the protracted call for  
the queſtion, ſome leiſure might perhaps be  
found, to commune with your own hearts,  
and to be ſtill. You might find a few ſpare  
moments to reflect upon that ambitious avarice,  
that thirſt for gold, which, according  
to

to the calculations of Lord Monboddo, has sacrificed five millions of the inhabitants of India to the establishment of a British trade—you might cast a melancholy view along that vast extent of islands, converted into prisons and charnel-houses for your African slaves, where the blood of natives became a cement to bind disjointed colonies—and the miserable prospect of mercantile pillage and desolation, would only terminate with the boundaries of the world.

You will talk to me, I know, of national grandeur—and, with an air of borrowed dignity, will point to those fleets which bear our standard triumphant over every sea. I willingly grant to your extensive trade the utmost merit which it can claim as a school for our seamen—but while those East and West Indies continue gaping, like open graves, to swallow up our soldiers, your boasted nursery will resemble the inhuman  
and



and monstrous wife of the unfortunate Pelowitz, who regularly butchered her elder born the moment she had given birth to a second.

But it is time, Sir, to turn from these scenes of horror and of death. Let us now consider the pretensions of those venerable men whom you have pronounced "to have "no business in Parliament"—At this transition I feel a pleasure similar to that which an eminent painter describes himself to have once experienced in Italy, when, turning his eyes with disgust from the crucifixion of Policrates by Salvator Rosa, he inadvertently fixed them upon the Aurora of Guido.

Old jokes, which have descended to the family of wits, like heir-looms from generation to generation, continue to be played off against the Clergy of the Reformed Church,  
in

in the same manner as they were before levelled against the beastly Monks of gross and ignorant ages. The severe Junius has observed that "a Priest of the 12th or of the 18th century is one and the same being." He was too well acquainted with history, and much too able a reasoner, not to know that his assertion was false. Like his antipathy to the natives of North Britain, it proves, that his sentiments were illiberal, though his style was manly. The Clergy of England are no longer what they once were—a body of men distinguished from their fellow citizens by separate laws, and by incompatible interests. They are now bound to their country, to their contemporaries, and to unborn ages, by the same social ties which unite the rest of mankind. They acknowledge no Sovereign but our own—they are husbands and fathers like ourselves. They are no longer those men whom Voltaire humourously describes as  
"bound



“bound by a vow to have no wives but  
 “those belonging to their neighbours.”—  
 They are now admitted to the happy privilege of becoming legitimate parents—like other fathers, they live along the line of their posterity—and, like them, are interested, by the future welfare of their children, in the formation of laws whose effects may not take place till years after they themselves shall be no more. They are no longer those men, whom the eloquent historian of Charles the Vth represents as “having for their object to squeeze and to amass, but not to meliorate.” On the contrary, the improvement of their own revenue depends upon the encouragement which various circumstances may concur in extending to their industrious neighbours, and to the tillers of our land. They are interested even by selfish motives in promoting the welfare of their parishioners, *because their own maintenance must rise and fall in proportion*

*portion to the standard of general prosperity.*

An unfavourable harvest, or a law injurious to agriculture, is an equal misfortune to the farmer and to the parish priest. They are joint proprietors, though with different shares, of one and the same estate—their interests are inseparably connected, and I trust that their affections will never be disunited. I know that the right of maintenance, out of the annual profit of lands, transmitted through so many ages to our Parochial Clergy, has occasionally exposed them to much ill will from those who are not accustomed to reflect—and yet it will appear, upon a moment's consideration, that so far as tythes extend, this numerous and learned body of men, devoted to the service of Religion, and excluded from the emoluments of every other avocation, is supported without the expence of a single farthing to any individual upon earth. The man who buys an estate, or he who  
takes



takes a farm, is aware that he acquires no more than a claim to nine-tenths of its annual produce—and he likewise knows, that, had he obtained a right to the remaining share, the amount of his purchase-money, or of his rent, must have been increased to him in exactly the same proportion of a tenth. Neither is he in any respect a loser, who sells or who lets his estate. It descended to him, subject to a similar deduction of a tenth, due to another proprietor, whose claim is as good and as ancient as his own; and derived from the grant of the same original purchaser. If the possessor of a freehold encumbered with a mortgage should foolishly determine to fancy the whole at his disposal, the fault is in his own misconception, and not in the honest pretensions of the mortgagee.

I have dwelt upon this point, because I

am

am persuaded, that before you can succeed in carrying your theoretical aversion to Bishops into practical effect, it will be necessary to undermine that foundation, on which they stand secure, in the affections of the people. With this view attempts have been made to hold forth the Clergy in general as burthensome, and oppressive to the community—while its Prelates have been represented as the haughty and bloated successors of meek and industrious Apostles. If I mistake not, these Fishermen, to whom you are so fond of alluding, were Preachers of the Gospel, at precisely that period, when the tables of “the Money Changers” were overturned by the Saviour of Mankind. Believe me, Sir, in an enquiry like the present, you would act prudently in not recurring to remote periods. You must not look for your charters of honour, among parchments of much antiquity. I could produce  
some



some laws of no very distant date, in which you are described as infamous usurers, and classed with vagabonds and thieves.

That Humility is no longer the order of the day, is what Bishops must acknowledge, and perhaps may regret. Their mitres are not like the helmet of Albanazar, which purified the intellect of the wearer, and dispelled the frailties of his nature. We must say of them, as old Philip de Comines remarks of the Princes of his time—"There is in the best of them always a mixture of good and of bad—And how indeed can it be otherwise?—for they are men like ourselves, and perfection belongs to the Deity alone." Without, however, detracting from the merit of other most respectable orders, I believe that I may venture to assert—though some among them are certainly a disgrace to their profession—that there is more learning, more religion,

D

more

more virtue, and pure morality, at once united in the Clergy of the Church of England, than either is or ever was to be found in any other Body upon earth, however numerous or however distinguished. With a few most odious and lamentable exceptions, they form a constant succession of men, inured from their infancy to laborious study ; devoting their maturer years to the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge ; stored with all the wisdom of ages that are past ; and softening the harsh precepts of ancient philosophy by the mild and pure doctrines of more enlightened teachers. That men, whom distinguished piety or superior talents have placed at the head of this venerable Band, should ever be regarded as unworthy Members of a British Senate, is more than I shall easily be induced to credit—I shall much less wonder, if, at some future period, a liberal and enlightened people should wish to be informed,



formed, upon what principle of Representation, or by what Constitutional Law, they have hitherto been restricted in the free exercise of their great prerogative, and commanded to exclude from their choice all those who devote themselves to the service of the Church.

Our law books quote some resolutions of the House of Commons, and state that "the Clergy sit not with them, because they sit in convocation."—But, let me ask, Has the common law of England, or has any act of its Parliament, pronounced their sentence of exclusion?—The House of Commons possesses the undoubted power of establishing bye-laws for its own internal regulation—but it neither has, or would wish to have, authority to deprive a subject of his birth-right. The Clergy have either been hitherto indulged in a liberty to which they have no claim—or, they have been deprived of

a privilege which is theirs, in common with their fellow citizens.—They vote at elections for knights of the shire, in right of their freeholds—and like other men are admitted to every franchise of corporations and boroughs—Thus, by a strange absurdity, they are allowed to send their *representative* where they themselves are not entitled to *appear*. According to the spirit of the British Constitution, every man who is admissible as a voter, is eligible as a representative—excepting in those cases where the law of the land has declared the reverse.

A species of calumny, whose object is to lower the Clergy in the estimation of the Public, and which, though not absolutely new, has the advantage of a somewhat novel appearance, is at present in full circulation. It is better adapted to the habits and morals of the age, than the old thread-bare charge  
of



of indifference and inattention to their pastoral duties—and may, perhaps, meet with some temporary success. They are now accused of inclining towards an opposite extreme—and are charged with the intention of re-introducing all that mock piety, and hypocritical severity of demeanour, which have already once disgraced us as a nation.

The torrent of vice and immorality, which has poured in upon us with your boasted influx of wealth, and which is now at its high spring tide, requires strong dykes to preserve our Country from submersion. Something must certainly be done—but, whatever restraints may be judged expedient by those good and learned men who are said to be engaged in their consideration, the people may rest assured that extremes will be avoided. The tyranny of puritanism and that of irreligion are marked by the same leading features, and produce the same fatal effects. The last is a gay, the first a

gloomy guide to misery. Tiberius and Charles the Second were men of tempers the most dissimilar—one was the merriest, the other the most fullen of despots—yet Bishop Burnet discovered in the bust of the Emperor, which was shewn to him at Rome, the same characteristic lines of a tyrannic disposition, which he had before particularly noticed in the countenance of the British King.

How far it might be prudent, in the existing state of society, to recommend a rigid interference of the Legislature in regulations of moral conduct, is a question which calls for most serious consideration. Example will do more than precept—and, perhaps, by a little address on the part of those in elevated stations, Virtue might be rendered fashionable at the West end of the Town—We should then, Sir, very soon see her promenading the 'Change—and what was at first affectation, would in time become habit, and  
gradually



gradually form itself into a fixed principle. No such effect will ever proceed from the mandate of law. I fear indeed, that in the present irritable state of the public nerves, the sternness of her voice would do more harm than good. Compulsory acts of parliament are easily evaded. The Usury Bill, which certain transactions at your end of the town appeared to render necessary, was passed, no doubt, with the best intentions—but it has introduced new and circuitous modes of extortion, infinitely more fatal than those which it laboured to prevent. In the present case, severe statutes would produce a similar effect—They would, at best, but turn that torrent of filth which now rolls unconcealed through all our streets, exciting the terror and disgust, and consequently awakening the caution of passengers, into a thousand secret and unnoticed drains, conveying the same corruption to the same general sink, the overflowings of which will one day

prove dangerous in proportion as they may happen to be unexpected.

The Sabbath is, I own, most shamefully and most daringly insulted by every class of society—it is marked, at once by the rich and by the poor, as the grand day of general dissipation—Yet, if persons accustomed to alternate labour and tavern recreation should find themselves debarred by law, during four-and-twenty hours, from both, I very much fear, that the secret cellar, and all the horrors of day converted into darkness, would soon become a substitute for the licensed alehouse, and the eye of light. I would rather wish to see innocent and athletic diversions encouraged on the Sunday—and should the 'old pastimes which amused our ancestors have lost their power of attraction, let others be invented, if any one have ingenuity enough to merit the reward once offered by a Roman emperor



peror to him who should discover a new pleasure.

To hope that a voluntary reform may gradually be produced in the morals of the people, is, I should conceive, no visionary idea. Let us all contribute our share of exertion, and something, at least, may be done. Do you, Sir, set the example.—Begin either as senators, or as individuals, the great work of restoring public virtue, and we will then endeavour to forget, that to you must be attributed her present extinction. Sacrifice that unmanly resentment, which, unproductive of benefit to yourselves, proves ruinous to your Debtors. Propose a mitigation of those severe and murderous laws, which at once excite and sanction the malignant passions of an offended Creditor; and which, condemning the unfortunate tradesman to a life of captivity, expose his unprotected family to all the miseries and to all the temptations

tations of want. Consent to forego those profits, which you derive from public Lotteries. After the information communicated by Mr. Colquhoun, in his most excellent Book of Police, let them cease to disgrace our resources of finance—and, what is of infinitely more importance than all the rest, unite in immediately driving from their counters those contemptible men-milliners, and emasculated, six-foot measurers of lace and of ribbon, who disgust our eyes in every haberdasher's shop throughout the kingdom; and who occupy that only intermediate station, which indigent females can possibly find, between a life of servitude and a life of dishonour. I have seen the fatal effects of this their intrusion. I love to frequent the haunts of wretchedness, and to listen to the story of the unfortunate. I have heard from the daughters of affliction, such tales of domestic misery, and of ineffectual struggles to gain honest bread for a starving parent,

as



as almost rendered prostitution a virtue. Let Parliament once feel the force of your arguments against these three great evils, in the continuance of which you yourselves are the interested parties, and much will already be done towards amending the morals of the age. Little, indeed, will be wanting, but to put in execution the laws already existing. Indelicate and wanton prints will then be removed from public windows, and the press will be purified from that licentiousness which so frequently proves an enemy to its freedom. Much, however, as I disapprove of loose and immoral publications, no less do I blame the indiscreet zeal of those who would punish, as impious and as criminal, the free discussion of those doubts which many entertain in articles of Faith. Allowances should be made, adapted to the nature of every case; and I cannot but condemn the morose author of "Pursuits of Literature," whose lash,  
still

still reeking with the blood of Herculean Parr, has so severely chastised the wild sallies of an intemperate boy. But let not the author of "The Monk" be disheartened by this roughness of discipline. When riper years shall have cooled the ardour of his genius, and chastened the pruriency of a youthful imagination, his pen will produce such works, as shall transmit his name with honour to posterity.

But I am wandering, Sir, from the subject. It is time, indeed, to close its discussion. I shall take my leave of you for the present, by recommending to your consideration, with infinite propriety, the advice which was given by Junius, without the smallest <sup>necessity,</sup> to the good and gallant Draper:—"Learn prudence enough, not to  
"attract the public attention to a character  
"which will only pass without censure  
"when it passes without observation."—

At



At all events, like the "mihi plaudo, ipse domi" hero of the Roman Satirist, you will find sterling consolation at home, for all the contempt which you may experience abroad. You may say with a worthless man of the last century—"The less account the world makes of me, the greater value I am determined to set upon myself."—I have the honour, Sir, to subscribe myself with every becoming sentiment,

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON,  
April 25, 1798.